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## REPORT OF COMMITTEE ON ECONOMICS IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

To collect data on the teaching of Economics in our secondary schools the following questionnaire was sent to the president of each college and university in the United States with the request that it be handed to the member of the faculty in charge of the work in beginning Economics. Answers were received from approximately 200 colleges and from 70 universities.

To Teachers of Economics in universities and colleges:

The undersigned have been appointed by the American Economic Association as a committee to make an investigation of Economics as a study in secondary schools, and we bespeak your coöperation. Kindly fill out and return this sheet. We trust that the second question will not cause you more trouble than to call for a show of hands in class.

(Signed) E. T. TOWNE, Chairman, *University of N. Dakota,*  
*Grand Forks, N. Dak.*

G. O. VIRTUE, *University of Nebraska,*  
*Lincoln, Nebr.*

F. R. CLOW, *State Normal School,*  
*Oshkosh, Wis.*

1. How many students in your institution are taking beginning Economics?
2. How many of them had previously studied the following subjects in a secondary school:

- a. Economics .....
- b. Industrial History .....
- c. Sociology .....

3. Do you notice any difference in the quality of the work of those who have, and those who have not, previously studied Economics?

4. Give any information you may have as to whether any one of these three subjects is either increasing or decreasing in prominence in high schools.

5. (a) Do you favor the teaching of Economics in the high school?

- (b) Give your opinion of its relative value as compared with Industrial History and Sociology.

- (c) What phase of Economics (theory, description, history, problems) and what method of teaching do you consider most suitable for high schools?

Signed .....

Name of Institution.....

The answers to the first question showed that there were 22,680 students taking beginning Economics in these institutions. Of this total number (Question 2) 1774 (7.8 per cent) had previously studied Economics in a secondary school, 367 (1.6 per cent) had studied Industrial History, and 154 (.68 per cent) had studied Sociology. In other words, of the total number taking beginning Economics in our colleges and universities about 1 in every 13 had had previous

work in the subject, 1 in 62 had had work in Industrial History, and 1 in 147 had had work in Sociology.

There was apparently quite a difference of opinion regarding the quality of the work of those who had, and those who had not, previously studied Economics. Forty-five stated that they did notice a difference in the quality of the work of those who had previously studied the subject, 67 stated that they did not notice any difference, and 28 expressed themselves as not having sufficient evidence to form an opinion. The advantages of having previously studied the subject were given as: "It made the students more familiar with the tools at least"; "They displayed greater interest in the subject"; and "They were better able to grasp new concepts." Of those who noticed no difference in the quality of the work or felt that previous study of the subject was positively harmful, several suggested that the earlier work was too superficial, that often prejudices were created which it was difficult to overcome, or that the students seemed "weighted with laws and definitions which they had memorized and tried to substitute for independent thinking."

The answers to Question 4 showed that the opinion was practically unanimous that Economics was increasing in prominence in high schools. Forty-eight expressed the opinion that all three subjects were increasing in prominence; in addition to these, 64 thought that Economics, 21 that Industrial History, and 6 that Sociology, was increasing. Only one expressed the opinion that all were decreasing in importance, 3 thought that they were not increasing, and 3 thought that Economics was not increasing. These latter 3 were from Wisconsin. In this state Economics got quite a start in the high schools about twenty years ago, but figures were given showing that a smaller proportion of the high schools were offering courses in Economics now than a few years ago.

To the question, "Do you favor the teaching of Economics in the high school?" 115 replied that they did, 64 that they did not, and 78 that they did conditionally. Of the latter the greater number stated that they favored the teaching of Economics in the high school for those who did not go farther than the high school. Others stated that they favored it provided teachers adequately prepared to teach the subject could be found.

In asking for the opinion of teachers of Economics relative to the value of that subject as a high-school study as compared with Industrial History and Sociology, the committee appreciated that some might feel that it would be difficult to secure answers quite independ-

ent of any personal bias. However, it was thought that the opinions of economists on this subject would be of value because economists would be best acquainted with the subject matter, would have a knowledge of the appropriateness of this subject matter for a high-school course, and, furthermore, practically all economists have had more or less training in both Industrial History and Sociology. In the replies 105 expressed a preference for Economics, 58 for Industrial History, and 11 for Sociology. In addition to these, 21 expressed a preference for Economics and Industrial History and 3 for Sociology and Industrial History.

A careful analysis of the replies to Question 5c shows an almost unanimous opinion that distinctly theoretical Economics has no place in a high school. Out of the entire number of replies only 2 favored "theory" as the phase of Economics most suitable for high schools; 19 favored a combination of theory and problems, 6 theory and description, and 2 theory and history; 11 suggested a combination of all four phases—that is, theory, description, history, and problems. The opinion expressed was very decidedly in favor of description and problems; 32 expressed a preference for problems, 29 for description, and 50 for description and problems; 17 expressed a preference for history, 17 for history and problems, and 23 for history and description. Combining these we have 184 expressing a preference for description, problems or history, or some combination of these.

Another fairly accurate view of the relative weight attached to these different phases of Economics is found in totaling the several phases mentioned. This shows that "problems" were mentioned by 145, "description" by 132, "history" by 83, and "theory" by 40. From the answers received, then, there seems to be a very general consensus of opinion that for secondary school work in Economics there should be comparatively little theory, and that only in combination with descriptions and problems; that the emphasis should be rather upon concrete economic problems, supplemented by a considerable descriptive material, and some history.

The committee wrote to all of the state superintendents of public instruction, asking for the number of high schools in which Economics is taught and the number of pupils taking the study. The same questions were asked with reference to Sociology and Industrial History, because there has been a recent movement to substitute these studies for Economics.

The states which gave the number of pupils who studied Economics in high schools during a year are listed in the following table. Some

of them also gave the number of high schools in which Economics was taught. In order to show the significance of these figures for pupils and schools, the total numbers of pupils and schools in each state are given for comparison. The asterisk \* indicates that the figures were taken from the report of the United States Commissioner of Education for 1914.

NUMBER OF HIGH SCHOOLS IN SEVERAL STATES, NUMBER OF PUPILS ATTENDING,  
AND NUMBER TAKING ECONOMICS IN SUCH SCHOOLS IN ONE YEAR

States	Pupils Taking Economics	All Pupils In High Schools	Schools Offering Economics	All High Schools
California	1579	*54738	68	*234
Connecticut	139	*17754		
Idaho	88	7155		
Indiana	84	49999	1	592
Iowa	10480	*45877	518	*588
Louisiana	5	*8158	1	*111
Minnesota	1152	39520	57	221
Missouri	736	51665	49	598
Nebraska	359	*25716	19	*377
North Carolina	22	16783	3	570
North Dakota	227	8035	24	128
Ohio	2410	*77328	225?	*811
Washington	1837	*26036		
West Virginia	245	*7804	10?	*96

The following additional information with reference to Economics was given in the replies:

Alabama: Given in a majority of high schools.

Idaho: A bulletin issued in 1915 recommends Economics or Sociology.

Iowa: Economics required in normal training high schools.

Kansas: Given in about twenty high schools out of 423.\*

Kentucky: An optional study; given in a dozen of the larger schools.

Louisiana: More schools expected to offer Economics this year.

Minnesota: Number of students increased 50 per cent in last five years.

Missouri: The third year Economics has been taught.

Montana: Elective in nearly all that have a four years' course.

Nevada: An optional study, taught in several schools.

New Jersey: In a few schools. Department of Public Instruction has issued a syllabus on Economics with suggestions for teaching.

New York: 1336 examination papers in Economics written in approved secondary schools. The "tendency is to combine the study of economic questions with the study of History."

North Dakota: "In practically all first-class high schools." The proportion of pupils taking Economics is increasing.

Oregon: "Not more than six schools offering these subjects."

Pennsylvania: 299 pupils in eight schools; about 30 schools in all offer Economics out of the total 886.\*

South Dakota: Three schools in 1914-15.

Tennessee: Two schools out of 172.

Washington: The students taking Economics are about one-third of all in the twelfth grade.

West Virginia: Over twice as many as two years ago.

Wisconsin: "The usual difficulty with this work is that it is made too technical and too scientific to be within the interest and capacity of most high-school pupils. I should think that possibly 10 per cent of the high schools offer Economics as a separate study."

The returns for Sociology are as follows:

California: Four schools and 85 pupils.

Indiana: One school, 150 pupils.

Iowa: Five or 6 schools.

Minnesota: Authorized but not given in any high school.

North Carolina: Two schools and 18 pupils.

Pennsylvania: Only half a dozen schools outside of Philadelphia and Pittsburgh.

For Industrial History the returns are as follows:

California: 19 schools and 420 pupils.

Connecticut: 302 pupils.

Idaho: 5 pupils.

Iowa: 18 schools.

Maryland: In half a dozen schools in connection with English and American History.

Nebraska: History of Commerce in one school, 70 pupils.

Wisconsin: Not a separate study; included in the year of American History.

There are nine states from which no replies have been received. South Carolina and Delaware reply that no courses are given in these subjects. Maryland high schools offer neither Economics nor Sociology.

The following states reply that they have no data at hand from which to answer our questions: Florida, Maine, Massachusetts, Michigan, New Jersey, Rhode Island, Texas, Vermont, Virginia, and Wyoming.

E. T. TOWNE,

G. O. VIRTUE,

F. R. CLOW,

*Committee.*